

## **Introduction to the Special Issue: Proceedings for the 2023 Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference**

Julianne Gerbrandt and Marshall Gerbrandt

It is with fond memories and hope for the future that we share the proceedings from the 2023 Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference (AEGSC), *Confronting, Exploring, and Becoming: Global Challenges in Education*. The AEGSC is a longstanding tradition within the University of New Brunswick's Faculty of Education. Located on the beautiful and bountiful land of the Wolastoqiyik, the twelfth iteration of this conference adopted a hybrid format in hopes of extending participation beyond our local community. The AEGSC committee sought to bring together education graduate students to listen, learn, and support one another within a caring community of scholars. More than 50 in-person participants joined us at the University of New Brunswick for two days of discussion, reflection, and connection. We were also joined by nearly 30 online participants who represented a plurality of institutions and communities that extended well beyond the Atlantic region of Canada.

The conference opened with a reflective keynote called *Piluwitahasuwawsuwakon: A Co-learning Journey* from Elder Dr. Albert Marshall and Dr. Jen Rowett. They generously invited us to think about the meaning behind this Wolastoqey phrase, encouraging us all to walk the talk and to actively pursue truth and reconcili-action. With these ideas in mind, conferencegoers filtered into two classrooms in Marshall d'Avary Hall for the first of 19 presentations that took place on day one. Day two began with an energizing keynote from Dr. Matt McGuire, entitled *Top 10 Things Every PhD Student Should Know*. Dr. McGuire playfully shared the highs and lows of his own journey from classroom teacher to educational researcher. Participants then set off for the first of 12 presentations that took place on day two.

The AEGSC is planned, organized, and executed by graduate students at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton and beyond. All presenters contributed their time and expertise by reviewing abstracts in the months leading up to the conference, and each author in these proceedings was required to engage in the peer review process by reviewing the written contributions of their peers. By involving fellow graduate students in the conference and editorial processes from start to finish, we hoped to build skills and confidence together. Research dissemination can be intimidating, and we are committed to creating an environment of radical care that supports us when we are discouraged, challenges us to aim higher, and celebrates our achievements.

These conference proceedings are a manifestation of radical care in practice, offering a space for graduate student researchers to disseminate their ideas to an interested audience. In this issue, eighteen articles speak to a wide range of topics and raise important questions about global challenges in education. The relevance of these questions extends beyond researchers and include students, teachers, administrators, and those whose lives, both personal and professional, engage with education in its many forms. Each article speaks to issues of importance and represents the thoughts, ideas, and questions relevant to the author at a certain moment in time. They also reflect the many different stages and phases of graduate study, which encompasses so much more than reporting empirical results at the conclusion of a doctorate degree. In these proceedings, you will find literature reviews, theoretical papers, reflective essays, and critical analyses that attest to the learning and growing that occurs throughout the graduate journey.

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We close this introduction to the 2023 AEGSC proceedings with an invitation. Please join us in creating a community of graduate students who come from different contexts, who have unique strengths, and who aspire to wide-ranging goals. Join us in recognizing and valuing a safe space where confronting, exploring, and becoming are integrated within the graduate student experience. And join us in imagining what this might look like in the future.

Happy reading!

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